

A photograph of three people wearing maroon hoods and white masks, standing in front of a stone wall and a blurred green background. The person in the foreground has a beard and is looking directly at the camera. The other two people are slightly behind and to the left.

manitoba

UNDERGROUND

opera

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Pathway to the future



*Even a global pandemic couldn't thwart its appetite
for pushing creative boundaries and taking artistic risks
in a 'New Normal' age.*

-Opera Canada

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Jolean Groundbeef

Staff

- | | |
|---|--|
| Brendan M ^c Keen
<i>General Manager</i> | Kimberley-Ann Bartczak
<i>Associate Artistic Director</i> |
| Brenna Corner
<i>Artistic Director</i> | Karen Santos
<i>Director of Production</i> |
| Janice Marple
<i>Director of Administration</i> | Carmen Harris
<i>Social Media Manager</i> |

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- Andrea Bellhouse, *Chair*
Craig Ross, *Vice-Chair*
Nicki LeGrand, *Treasurer*
Olivia Kang,
Artists' Representative
Lisa-Marie Carlson
Taliesen Dorais-Fleming
Ron Kirby
Danielle Tétrault
Rosemarie van der Hooft
Dr. Carolyn Weiss

REPORT FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

For Better or For Worse turned out to be For Better and For Better. (You're welcome for that play on words).

As you'll see in this year's annual report, we produced one of our most exciting and groundbreaking seasons yet, returned with our deeply missed Opera for Children Tour, programmed some very exciting outreach performances, and reached financial heights never before seen.

Our festival presented two original productions developed by directors Jacqueline Loewen and Adam Da Ros.

We were thrilled to emphasize the MANITOBA in Manitoba Underground Opera and fulfill our mandate to spread opera across our province with our Opera for Children Tour, which returned for the first time since 2019. Despite the uncertainty of the pandemic, our bold tour spent 10 days touring western and northern Manitoba in addition to ten days in Winnipeg and the surrounding area. From Brandon, to Flin Flon, to Steinbach, to Thompson, we introduced a swath of 5-11 year olds (plus their eager parents) to the storytelling power of opera.

Our singers circulated all over Winnipeg to share their voices with eager audiences. From zooming into a seniors' residence, to collaborating on a drag night at a gay bar, to an outdoor picnic in historic ruins, MUO did it all. An estimated 1,000 people took part in our free programming that was capped off with Culture Days at the Forks in October.



Brendan McKeen



Clockwise from top left: Nikita Labdon, Nolan Kehler, Jean van der Merwe, and Olivia Kang

2022 was a year of investment. Our community rallied around us and our revenues increased by 50% to over \$150,000. We were able to pay over \$80,000 to artists for their work and invested over \$17,000 in large-scale equipment to be used year after year.

It was my honour and privilege to lead MUO through this year. Thank you to all of our artists, funders, donors, volunteers, and especially thank you to my steadfast board of directors. For the first time, we are bidding adieu to two of our founding members. Thank you Danielle and Andrea who have been here since the beginning. It's amazing to think of how much we've grown in the past seven years.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bren McKeen".

Brendan McKeen, General Manager



ORPHÉE ET EURYDICE

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

STAGE DIRECTOR Jacqueline Loewen*
MUSIC DIRECTOR Grant Harville
STAGE MANAGER Meaghan Fletcher
RÉPÉTITEUR Lee Houghton Stewart

ORPHEE James McLennan*
EURYDICE Christina Thansich-Smith
AMORE Olivia Kang

CHORUS Montanna Coad, Beverley
Covert, Rebecca Danos,
Brittany Dheilily, Linda
Feasby, Paul Forget, Jayden
Frazer, Kyler Humble, Isla
Shea, Peter Steur, Chloe
Thiessen, Cathy Wach-
Dueck

ORCHESTRA Natalie Dawe, Lee Houghton
Stewart, Momoko
Matsumura, Nolan Powell,
Laurel Ridd, Ruslan Rusin,
Julie Savard, Darryl Strain

*Thanisch-Smith
displayed shimmering
vocals... her crystal
clear voice caressing
the ear with ringing
high notes.
-Opera Canada*

*“The participation of these Artists is arranged by permission of
Canadian Actors’ Equity Association under the provisions of the
Dance Opera Theatre Policy (DOT).”*



McLennan, in notably a role debut immediately set the tone with his intensely dramatic acting skills; first appearing wracked with grief for his deceased wife that quickly established their emotional relationship... Not least of all, the tenor further showed off his technical bravura during Act I's "L'espoir renait dans mon ame," dazzling with quicksilver runs and ornamentation in the showstopper ariette Gluck subsequently added to the opera's 1762 Italian forerunner, Orfeo ed Euridice. (Opera Canada)



MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

STAGE DIRECTOR Adam Da Ros*
MUSIC DIRECTOR Diane Spiers
STAGE MANAGER Ridge Romanishen
RÉPÉTITEUR Shannon Hiebert

(in order of vocal
appearance)

FIGARO Heather Molloy*
SUSANNA Chelsea Kutyn
CHERUBINO Hailey Witt
COUNT Henry Chen*
LAWYERDUDE Kyle Briscoe
COUNTESS Karen Santos
MARCELINA Rosemarie van der Hoof
BARTOLO Matthew Pauls
ANTONIO Paul Forget

ORCHESTRA Shannon Hiebert, Sonia
Lazar, Scott Miller

*Looking back on the
night, everything
seemed to be in its
right place in
MUO's Marriage of
Figaro.
-Schmopera*

*"The participation of these Artists is arranged by permission of
Canadian Actors' Equity Association under the provisions of the
Dance Opera Theatre Policy (DOT)."*



The choice of venue held a certain degree of interest, as it was evident from listening to the various conversations at nearby tables that there were a great deal of “firsts”—many of them a direct result of being in an unapologetic 2SLGBTQIA+ space. Some audience members were experiencing gender-neutral washrooms for the first time, and others were asking questions about pronouns that they likely would not have asked otherwise. Paired with the audience members who had never been to an opera before, the air felt full of curiosity. (Schmopera)

OPERA FOR CHILDREN TOUR

An opera for children that was juuuuuust right!

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

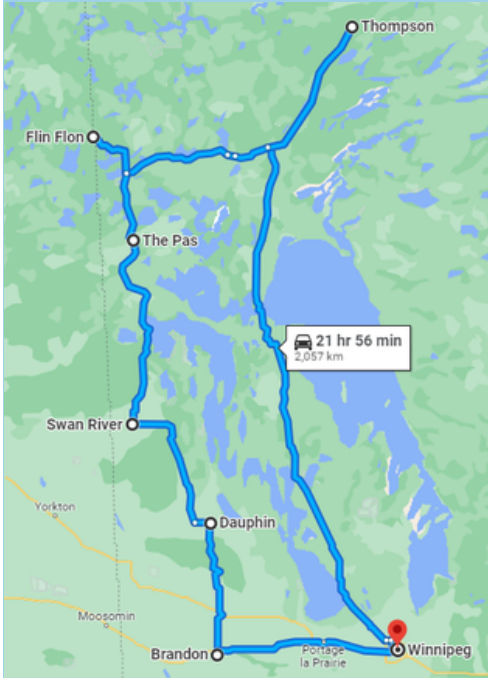
STAGE DIRECTOR Sawyer Craig

MUSIC DIRECTOR Leanne Hiebert
& PIANIST

STAGE MANAGER Monica Hultin
& TOUR MANAGER

GOLDIE B. LOCKS Paulina Gonzalez
MAMA BEAR Jacqueline Arthur
PEAK BEAR Chris Donlevy
PAPA BEAR Nathan Dyck

The community was thrilled about the performance. We had 133 people attend, which was a great turn out. Both parents and kids said they enjoyed it. The staff thought it was great too!
-Dodi Abbot, Librarian, Swan River Library



After a cautious wait, MUO burst back on to the library floors with Goldie B Locks and the Three Singing Bears. A total of 25 performances reached over 1,150 parents and children from August 12 to September 2.

This tour marked the first time MUO sent performers out of town overnight. A 10-day tour began and ended in Winnipeg and traveled over 2,000km around our province.

Highlights included a featured performance at the Blueberry Jam Outdoor Stage in Flin Flon, a stop in Swan River for 133(!) parents and children, and a show in Ericksdale for 43 people. Ericksdale has a population of 800 and I'm grateful that 5% of the town all spent their afternoon with us.



Cast and crew with little fans and librarians across our province



- 2022 Destinations
- Sir William Stephenson Library*
 - Charleswood Library*
 - Louis Riel Library*
 - Portage la Prairie Regional Library*
 - Brandon Public Library*
 - Minnedosa Community Childcare Cooperative*
 - Dauphin Public Library*
 - Swan River North-West Regional Library*
 - The Pas Regional Library*
 - Flin Flon Arts Council*
 - Thompson Public Library*
 - Siglunes District Library (Ashern)*
 - Ericksdale Public Library*
 - Windsor Park Library*
 - Transcona Library*
 - Jake Epp Library (Steinbach)*
 - Henderson Library*
 - Cornish Library*
 - St. James-Assiniboia Library*
 - Munroe Library*
 - Fort Garry Library*
 - St. Vital Library*
 - St. John's Library*
 - Pembina Trail Library*

OPERA AROUND TOWN

MUO's outreach journey began in February when we zoomed into Misericordia Place for two private zoom performances for one of our biggest fans, Edith. Sopranos Katherine Mayba and Sydney Clarke sang and chatted with Edith.

Up next was our regularly scheduled appearance with Heritage Winnipeg for Doors Open. We returned to the Millennium Centre for an afternoon of opera, musical theatre, and art song for 170 attendees. Pianist Lee Houghton Stewart was joined by sopranos Jayne Hammond, Nikita Labdon, and Hailey Witt.

The following month, we ventured outside the city to perform a picnic concert on the grounds of Lower Fort Garry. Previously, we presented our drive-in performance of *Béatrice et Bénédict* in the parking lot, so it was great to venture into the Fort for this free concert. *Although you can't see it, we had a temporary drizzle during one aria but our tough Prairie audience held firm and stayed until the end.

For our first collaboration with Club 200, we presented *Divas and Dragoons* on August 5 at 10:30pm. The club was packed with over 100 attendees, most of whom had never heard live opera before, who cheered and hollered in spite of not knowing what to expect. Drag performers Dirt from the Ground, Feather Talia, Miss Assuma Gender, and Moxie Cotton were joined by singing performers Ashley Boychuk, Kyle Briscoe, Janice Marple, and Marlise Ritchie, with Megan Dufprat accompanying on keyboard. If we want new audiences for opera, then we need to bring opera to them on their terms in their spaces. This night was the most successful performance of our year.



Marlise Ritchie



"Listening to opera makes my heart wake up," says Edith Almadi. "When I listen, I think of happiness."



Jason Klippenstein



Miss Assuma Gender

Our mid-festival outreach included pop-up performances. We appeared at the Dalnavert Museum, Millennium Centre with Heritage Winnipeg, and WCB Plaza with Downtown Winnipeg Biz's Summer Concert Series. Performers included Megan Dufurat, Nolan Kehler, Jason Klippenstein, and Janice Marple.

Janice also offered An Introduction to Opera performance with Winnipeg Public Libraries on August 11. *"Thank you for bringing opera to new and often unusual venues. And for giving singers a place to perform"* - Attendee

Outreach ended with an absolute banger with our engagement with The Forks for Culture Days. Opera and drag blended together for over 100 attendees including lip syncs, sing-a-longs, and a Made in Manitoba spontaneous mini-opera! Attendees were asked to jump on stage at the end to perform alongside Hailey Witt for a performance of the Habanera from Carmen. Our brave volunteers were able to perform right next to a professional opera singer for the first time in their lives. In addition to Hailey, singers Kyle Briscoe, Nikita Labdon, and Marlise Ritchie performed alongside drag performers Miss Assuma Gender and Jolean Groundbeef. We graciously thank the Forks and Culture Days for funding this experience.



Marlise Ritchie and Feather Talia



Jayne Hammond

EVENTS

Performers

Chris Donlevy
Paulina Gonzalez
Rosemarie van der Hooft
Lee Houghton Stewart
Olivia Kang
Chelsea Kutyn
Nicki LeGrand
Kinnon Weddall

Singing Performers

Ashley Boychuk
Stephen Haiko-Pena
Olivia Kang
Andrea Lett
Janice Marple
Ana Toumine

Drag Performers

Miss Assuma Gender
Dirt from the Ground
Edyn Peaches
Feather Talia.

Pianist

Megan Dufprat

Bears and Brews

Another returning favourite this year was MUO's annual fundraising event. This year, we held an afternoon tea to support our Opera for Children Tour. Aptly named Bears and Brews, the afternoon featured talented singing, a silent auction, bountiful plates of dainties, and tea from Amsterdam Tea Room.

The afternoon raised over \$3,000 in funds to help get our tour that little bit further.

Working on Sunshine

While conceiving of The Marriage of Figaro, MUO planned to make deep and lasting connections with the community the show represented. One initiative was to present a concert to raise funds for a queer charity. Chosen by an advisory panel of queer individuals, MUO presented a concert in support of Sunshine House.

Sunshine House is a community drop-in and resource centre focusing on harm reduction and social inclusion. They work to provide programming that fulfills people's social, community, and recreational needs. Participants can come as they are, and are not expected to be "clean" or sober.

Working on Sunshine raised \$1,500 and this concert marked our third engagement with Club 200 in 2022.

OPERA AND THE QUEER COMMUNITY

This year, MUO sought to make deeper and meaningful connections with our community.

Guided by board members Taliesen Dorais-Fleming and Craig Ross, we engaged with the queer community through Club 200 and drag performers. The genre of opera has had a complicated relationship with the queer community. It has depicted heterosexual relationships on stage with queer situations and has been generally welcoming behind the scenes to parts of the queer community. However, it continues to promote elements of internalized bias to the community and struggles to create stories that accurately portray queer people and their relationships.

Our 2022 mission included representing the queer community on stage with Marriage of Figaro, presenting a free drag lip syncing performance, and fundraising for a queer charity. Our partnership went so well that we included drag performers at The Forks' Culture Days event. Reception has been very positive this year and we look forward to continuing engagement with this community outside of our artform. Each queer artist was paid equitably for their involvement and contributions throughout every phase.

MUO looks forward to continuing and deepening these community relationships and partnerships over time.



“These thoughtful choices injected a quasi-subversive quality into the entire show for which one can only imagine the Wunderkind cackling with glee.”



Dirt from the Ground

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

One year ago, MUO declared our excitement for reaching the "six-figure club" with just over \$100,000 in revenue. This year we smashed that out of the park with a 50% increase.

All revenue streams increased this year, showing healthy signs of development. At the end of the year, we secured a surplus of \$5,719.49. This marks the fourth consecutive year of surplus for MUO, demonstrating strong financial management throughout the pandemic.

How MUO uses our surpluses-

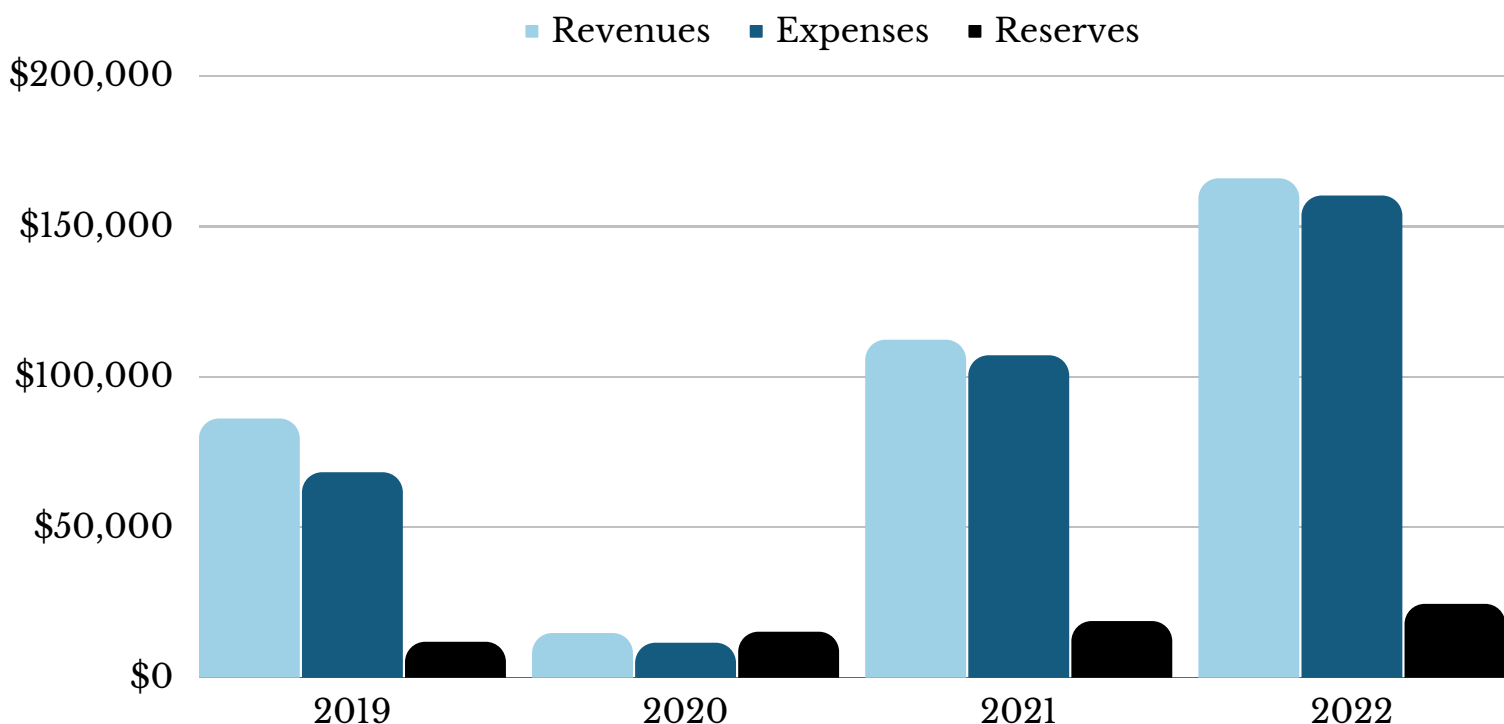
MUO does not receive operating funding from any government agency. Because of this, we are always in a precarious position when it comes to guaranteeing our activities year to year.

MUO rolls over all box office sales to the subsequent year to ensure financial stability. Our budgets never include box office sales as a requirement for meeting goals.

We use these sales to create our own annual operating funding to make sure we can bring great opera to this province every year.

Balance Sheet Comparison

	DEC 31, 22	DEC 31, 21	DEC 31, 20
Assets			
Total Chequing / Savings	56,529.82	54,919.63	45,170.28
Accounts Receivable	4,135.30		
Other Current Assets	2,497.49	1,012.19	817.26
Total Assets	63,162.61	55,931.82	45,987.54
Liabilities / Equity			
Current Liabilities	8,120.79	13,755.49	859.90
Deferred Funding	30,550.00	23,354.00	30,000.00
Total Liabilities	38,620.79	37,109.49	30,859.90
Unrestricted Net Assets	18,822.33	15,127.64	11,940.38
Net Income	5,719.49	3,694.69	3,187.26
Total Equity	24,541.82	18,822.33	15,127.64
Total Liabilities & Equity	63,162.61	55,931.82	45,987.54



PROFIT & LOSS

Income	DEC 31, 22	DEC 31, 21	DEC 31, 20
Tickets Sales	18,168.38	5,775.09	-
Concession Sales	375.50	-	-
Other Revenue	8,650.00	700.00	-
Bank Interest	13.50	-	-
Donations	16,328.00	12,056.79	4,418.92
Corporate Sponsors	3,000.00	1,200.00	550.00
Foundations	30,747.00	27,813.00	5,000.00
Fundraising Events	3,053.60	-	-
Canada Council - Operating	-	-	5,000.00
Canada Council - Project	46,000.00	31,500.00	-
Manitoba Arts Council - Operating	3,000.00	3,150.00	-
Manitoba Arts Council - Project	28,020.00	30,000.00	-
Winnipeg Arts Council - Project	8,000.00	-	-
Total Income	165,855.98	112,194.88	14,698.92
Expense			
Artistic	103,878.10	77,587.55	2,477.04
Programming	33,240.62	8,237.36	2,031.44
Marketing	4,421.14	6,130.27	402.45
Fundraising	1,576.67	246.37	143.60
Administration	15,919.96	14,833.64	6,457.13
Total Expense	159,036.49	107,035.19	11,511.66
Net Ordinary Income	6,819.49	5,159.69	3,187.26
Other Expense -			
Donation to Other Charities	1,100.00	1,465.00	-
Net Income	5,719.49	3,694.69	3,187.26

OUR SUPPORTERS, FUNDERS & DONORS

Our Public Funders



Conseil des arts du Canada Canada Council for the Arts



MANITOBA ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DU MANITOBA



WINNIPEG ARTS COUNCIL

Our Private Funders



Marriage of Figaro
Supporter



Our Event
Sponsors



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Susan Campbell
Florence Carey
Lisa-Marie Carlson*
Caitlin Coppell
Tracy Dahl
Dr. Rebecca Danos
Taliesin Dorais-Fleming*
Linda Feasby
In honour of Craig Ross
Dennis and Janet
Glazebrook
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Leona Herzog
Ron Kirby*
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Katerina Kupca*
Nicole LeGrand*
Janice Marple*
Robert McDowall

Our Wine Sponsor



Our Opera for Children
Tour Partner



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**Denotes monthly giver*

Our Venue Sponsors



